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USAF RELEVANCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY
A FIRST QUARTER TEAM IN A FOUR QUARTER GAME

by

Andrew S. Kovich, Major, USAF

A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

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Advisor: Dr. Lewis Griffith

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Abstract

The rise of terrorism by non-state actors as a primary threat to U.S. national security challenges the relevance of air and space power. This study first looks at the current and foreseeable security environment and identifies weak/failing states as the largest strategic threat to the United States since the Cold War. Next, the paper describes the culture of the U.S. military as a whole and assesses the relevance of the current American way of war to meeting the challenges of the weak/failing state security threat. If the military studied military operations other than war (MOOTW) lessons as much as the combat lessons, they would see that the U.S. has always struggled with winning the peace in operations short of major combat. Third, the author examines how the United States Air Force's preferred way of war coupled with a service bias toward combat flying has manifested itself in a body of doctrine that limits the ability of the service to provide a stronger contribution to the nation. Just as the Air Force balanced the nuclear and conventional force structure in favor of conventional forces, the USAF must now think about tailoring its conventional forces for major combat operations to ones more suitable for MOOTW. Finally, the author provides recommendations for the Department of Defense in general and the USAF in particular, to transform educational and doctrinal thinking to embrace capabilities ready to respond throughout the spectrum of conflict.

Introduction

In default of knowing how to do what they ought, they are very naturally led to do what they know.

—Maurice Comte de Saxe

The rise of terrorism by non-state actors as a primary threat to U.S. national security challenges the relevance of air and space power. Although the U.S. has repeatedly demonstrated the ability to achieve decisive effects using air and space power in conventional war, it has not mastered the use of these tools against terrorists and guerillas.¹ Without the ability to be decisive in all areas of the conflict spectrum, the Air Force is like a football team who comes out scoring touchdowns in the first quarter only to lose their tremendous lead by the fourth. To become a four-quarter team, the United States Air Force must address some fundamental challenges to its preferred way of war.²

When Americans think of war, they envision great battles like Gettysburg, Normandy, or Desert Storm. “Yet the purpose of war is not battle at all. It is a more perfect *peace*.”³ The destruction of the enemy army in battle is only a means to an end.⁴ In some cases, the engagement following major combat operations is the decisive phase. “We are now seeing that the hardest, longest, and most important work comes after the bombing stops, when rebuilding replaces destroying and consensus-building replaces precision strikes.”⁵ This is not a new revelation. The majority of conflicts the United States has waged in its 200+ year history required less application of force on the battlefield and more non-hostile engagement to wage the peace. However, because low-level conflicts or reconstruction operations are often characterized by a low threat to national survival and/or a smaller force commitment, they are often dismissed as second-rate activities by military institutions. Despite this bias, these activities will continue to become more common in the future and the USAF should transform itself to better meet these new challenges. A new USAF

must be not only capable of conducting war in the traditional sense of major combat operations (MCO), but also be effective pursuing activities categorized as “other than war.”

Within the “other than war” category we find a plethora of terms: peace operations, stability and reconstruction (S&R) operations, stability and support operations (SASO), humanitarian operations, low-intensity conflict (LIC), counterinsurgency (COIN), crises and lesser conflicts (CALC), fourth generation warfare (4GW), small wars, and military operations other than war (MOOTW). Current doctrine recognizes MOOTW as the term that encompasses all of the aforementioned categories.⁶ In this paper, some of these terms are used interchangeably but the point is that big state-on-state war is rare, MCO are prosecuted in a shorter time span, and that MOOTW missions have become the most common type of military operation since Desert Storm. Furthermore, MOOTW will continue to become the primary function of the military in the 21st century security environment. To make the military in general and the USAF in particular more relevant in the global war on terrorism (GWOT) and today’s security environment, there must be a change in the cultural views of war and the primary contributions of the military services.

Beginning in section two, this paper will examine the current security environment and the nature of today’s threats and those in the near future. Globalization has amplified the impact of weak or failed states on the rest of the world. Non-state actors use these states as bases of operations to further an ideological agenda or prosecute criminal activity. The challenge for the U.S. is to decrease weak/failing state sanctuaries and thus limit the amount of power non-state actors can wield on the global stage. A vital element in combating the danger from weak and failing states is a military force optimized for meeting the challenges inherent to these unconventional threats.⁷

Next, the paper examines the kind of war the institutional military wants to fight versus the ones it will most likely face and why. War has changed, but the institutions responsible for

prosecuting them have apparently changed little. Although war should no longer be viewed in terms of MCO alone, MCO seem to govern the structure and consequently the preference of military forces. The new “American way of war” characterized by stealth, speed and precision is in reality more a “way of battle.”⁸ Unfortunately successful battles don’t necessarily lead to victory in the kinds of “wars” U.S. forces are most likely to fight. The ability to precisely target enemy forces has been the focus of militaries for centuries. The American military has mastered this skill yet satisfactory conclusions to conflicts frequently evade them. Examples of these difficulties include U.S. operations in Lebanon, Somalia, and Haiti. Furthermore, the continued focus on MCO comes at the expense of mindsets and capabilities that might actually bring about a better state of peace. If the military is to truly win the nation’s wars, then the military as an institution must come to grips with the fundamental changes necessary to actually win those wars.⁹

Third, the paper examines USAF culture and the means with which it prefers to go to war. This culture is characterized by a love of technology, particularly combat aircraft. The belief that air power can provide war winning capability has sustained the Air Force since World War Two. Stealth technology coupled with precision guided munitions serves to fortify that belief. The search for aircraft that fly higher, faster, farther is illustrative of the USAF’s continued quest to justify its service autonomy by developing capabilities other than those for supporting other services.¹⁰ This culture creates a bias toward air-to-air combat, strategic strike capabilities, and conventional war at the expense of all other endeavors. This bias manifests itself in USAF education and doctrine that ultimately limits the potential Air Force contribution to Department of Defense (DoD) thinking regarding other missions and thus, the nation.¹¹

Finally, recommendations are provided for how the USAF can deliver a better contribution to the nation in the future. Although the USAF prefers MCO, they will increasingly be required to perform MOOTW missions in the 21st Century. Doing more than MCO means that the USAF must

adjust its conventional strike forces in much the same way as it did its nuclear forces. Just as the U.S. limited nuclear forces in favor of conventional forces at the end of the Cold War, they must now limit their large conventional forces in favor of forces better suited to the challenges of today. This paper does not advocate total elimination of traditional combat forces, but it does suggest reduction or realignment. The adjustment would allow our forces to become a more useful hedge against the future uncertainty of a near-peer competitor rather than the *raison d'être* for the service. The U.S. military has been in the position to refocus its attention on MOOTW before. These types of forces and missions “have been around much longer than many would think. Nineteenth-century Americans may not have referred to army activities associated with the punishment of recalcitrant Indians in the trans-Missouri West or the interposition of federal troops between hostile factions in Kansas as peace operations, but in essence that is what they were.”¹² Like the army of the late 1800s, the 21st Century Air Force does not openly embrace MOOTW missions but the vital purpose of those operations, then and now is “the maintenance of peace, order, and security.”¹³

Notes

¹ Thomas R. Searle. “Making Airpower Effective against Guerillas.” *Air and Space Power Journal*, (Fall 2004), 13

² General Tony Zinni offers a similar sport analogy: “There is a difference in winning battles, or defeating the enemy in battle, and winning the war. It strikes me that we are constantly redesigning the military to do something it already does pretty well. Breaking the organized resistance in Iraq, even though it might not have been the greatest army in the world, was done extremely well. We are very proud of our troops and the way that was executed and led. But it was not enough. At the end of the third inning we declared victory and said the game is over. It ain’t over. It is not going to be over in future wars. We need to talk about not how you win the peace as a separate part of the war, but you have to look at this thing from start to finish. It is not a phased conflict; there is not a fighting part and then another part. It is a nine inning game. At the end of the game, somebody is going to declare victory. Whatever blood poured onto the battlefield could be wasted if we do not follow it with understanding what victory is.” Anthony Zinni. “Understanding What Victory Is.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (October 2003), 32

³ Bevin Alexander. *How Great Generals Win* (New York, New York: WW Norton and Company, 1993), 30

⁴ *Ibid.*, 30

⁵ Dana Priest. *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America’s Military* (WW Norton and Company, 2004), 19

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⁶ Air Force Doctrine lists the following as MOOTW missions: enforcement of sanctions, enforcing exclusion zones, protection of shipping, strikes and raids, combating terrorism, counterdrug operations, ensuring freedom of navigation, noncombat evacuation operations, peace operations, recovery operations, arms control support, domestic support operations, foreign humanitarian assistance, nation assistance, show of force, and support to insurgency

⁷ “In today’s global security environment, sustained, large scale conventional war between states is unlikely, at least in the short term. But the conditions that generate internal conflict—discontent arising from globalization, the failure of economic development to keep pace with expectations; the collapse of traditional political, economic and social orders; widespread anger and resentment; environmental decay; population pressure; the pervasiveness of weak regimes; the growth of transnational organized crime; and, the widespread availability of arms—persist. As a result, insurgency has become both common and strategically significant. This poses a direct threat to American security. In today’s world, stability within states affects others. Interconnectedness, the permeability of states, the globalization of economies, the transparency arising from information technology, and the intermixing of people around the world give every conflict wider repercussions. Internal conflicts create refugee flows that destabilize neighboring states. They often spawn organized crime, as rebels turn to smuggling to raise capital and acquire weaponry. As the images of internal war are broadcasted or e-mailed around the world, awareness rises and, with it, demands for action or intervention. And internal conflicts and the weak states or areas outside government control which they create often serve as breeding grounds for terrorism.” Steven Metz.

“Unlearning Counterinsurgency.” *ROA National Security Report* (December 2004)

⁸ Antulio J. Echevarria II. “An American Way of War or Battle?” *Strategic Studies Newsletter*, (January 2004)

⁹ “How can battle time be critical in a war that lasts decades? Or what do we do if the enemy works hard not to produce any collectible signals? Rather than deal with the complex political, economic, and social aspects of the conflicts we are currently fighting, they focus on technological solutions to problems at the tactical level of war...strategic victory is not the sum of incredible, tactical victories...We continue to focus on technological solutions at the tactical and operational levels without a serious discussion of the strategic imperatives or the nature of the war we are fighting.” Thomas X. Hammes. *The Sling and The Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004), 191

¹⁰ Pape describes the USAF desire for autonomy. Robert A. Pape. *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 327. Builder describes the USAF pursuit of means over ends. Carl H. Builder. *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK): Transaction Publishers, 1994), 205

¹¹ “If the mission of the air force is to remain centered on air power, then air power must somehow be defined as more than force, airplanes or pilots: Air power must be more than force because the problems of the world must increasingly be addressed by the military with more than force. Air power must be more than airplanes because the power to be projected through the third dimension is also increasingly derived from critical space and ground support systems. Air power must be more than pilots because the power to be projected through the third dimension can often be more effectively derived from self-guided missiles, remotely-piloted vehicles, and unmanned platforms. Air power must be defined as more than combat, since the nature of conflict is changing worldwide. Regular warfare between nations is becoming less attractive, while irregular warfare

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between factions—ignoring national boundaries—is becoming more so.” Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, 262

¹² Tony R. Mullis. *Peacekeeping on the Plains. Army Operations in Bleeding Kansas* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004), xiv

¹³ *Ibid.*, xiv

The New Cold War: 21st Century Security

This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origins—war by guerillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him. It is a form of warfare uniquely adapted...to undermine the efforts of new and poor countries to maintain the freedom they have finally achieved. It preys on economic unrest and ethnic conflicts. It requires in those situations where we must encounter it, and these are the kinds of challenges that will be before us in the next decade if freedom is to be saved, a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.

—John F. Kennedy

Weak/failing states represent the largest strategic threat to the United States since the Cold War. The 2002 National Security Strategy highlighted this new danger by stating that “America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.”¹ The Brookings Institution described the threat this way,

Such states can and often do serve as safe havens and staging grounds for terrorist organizations. Failed states create environments that spur wider regional conflicts with significant economic and security costs in neighboring states. They pose serious challenges to U.S. interests in terms of refugee flows, trafficking in illicit goods, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, and lost trade and investment opportunities.²

It is for these reasons that weak/failing states should become the primary focus of the nation and the military services. To ignore these states could result in the conditions producing the next Afghanistan problem.

Afghanistan illustrated the consequences of allowing a state to fall into lawlessness. After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the United States no longer had interest in the region. The power vacuum left by the Soviets and Americans made way for tribal warfare and eventually the rise of the radical Islamic Taliban regime. Afghanistan’s poverty created a vacuum easily filled

by well-funded terrorist organizations. Afghanistan's harsh terrain and lack of infrastructure made it easy to conceal terrorist training/planning activities. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. government formally recognized Afghanistan and other failing states as vital security threats. As a result, the U.S. implemented policy, codified in the 2001 *National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States of America* and the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, to engage weak/failing states around the world in order to prevent another terrorist strike on the U.S. and to promote shared values and assure common security interests. In 2005, the U.S. has expanded its focus beyond terrorist hunting and engagement of weak/failing states to spreading democracy through the creation of states founded on individual rights and representative government. As author Max Boot observed, "The costs of engaging in places like Afghanistan are much lower than allowing them to become breeding grounds for terrorists such as those who struck America."³ Military operations in the 21st century will likely require increased engagement in weak/failing states around the world to create stability.

Thomas Barnett describes the states of the world as either connected or disconnected. Connected states are part of the functioning Core. Disconnected states make up the Gap. Core states have "network connectivity, financial transactions, liberal media, collective security, stable governments, rising standards of living, and more deaths by suicide than murder." Another key descriptor of Core states is that they have not gone to war against one another since the Second World War. Gap states, on the other hand, are "regions plagued by politically repressive regimes, widespread poverty and disease, routine mass murder, and—most important—the chronic conflicts that incubate the next generation of global terrorists."⁴ According to Barnett, the primary challenge for the U.S. is to aggressively engage these states in order to shrink the Gap. He goes on to say that "freedom cannot blossom without security. The United States is the only nation on earth capable of exporting security in a sustained fashion."⁵

Exporting security demands more than responsive and punitive action, more than stopping some action from occurring, and more than fighting major combat operations.⁶ “The United States wants to fight short, well defined wars”⁷ but shrinking the number of weak/failing states will be a decades-long commitment and the U.S. military’s stealth, speed and precision will take a backseat to low-tech persistence. In fact, “persistence may very well be more important than speed in small wars, where resolve and the tangible commitment of boots on the ground are more important commodities than raw firepower.”⁸ Conflicts in Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq have shown that skill sets, apart from those needed in major combat operations are required from our military. As historian Martin Van Crevold observed,

The roughly three-hundred year period in which war was associated with the type of political organization known as the state—first in Europe, and then, with its expansion, in other parts of the globe as well—seems to be coming to an end. If the last fifty years or so provide any guide, future wars will overwhelmingly be of the type known, however inaccurately, as “low intensity.” Both organizationally and in terms of equipment at their disposal, the armed forces of the world will have to adjust themselves to this situation by changing their doctrine, doing away with much of their heavy equipment and becoming more like police.”⁹

With this in mind, the military will almost inevitably be called upon to do more than just fight and win the nation’s wars.¹⁰ In the 21st century, “victory no longer happens when you capture the enemy capital...victory happens when you put in place a lasting, stable environment.”¹¹ According to Sir Michael Howard, the two conditions needed for this stable environment are: “first, the defeated people must accept the fact of defeat and realize that there is no chance of reversing the verdict in the foreseeable future, whether by military revival, skillful diplomacy or international propaganda. Second, they must become reconciled to their defeat by being treated, sooner or later, as partners in operating the new international order.”¹² The 21st century security environment demands that the military adapt its capability to the threats of terrorism and insurgencies. The United States Marine Corps Small Wars Manual addresses the challenges of these threats as follows,

Just as our preeminent large-scale conventional and nuclear capabilities of the 20th century pushed warfare to guerrilla and insurgency warfare, so the information, sensing, and strike capabilities of the 21st century will push the inevitable conflict of this century toward small wars. In these small wars, we may be forced to fight on terms far removed from our traditional way of war where massive firepower and mass production trumped all other capabilities.”¹³

Robert Kaplan also described the future threats when he said that the “U.S. military is back to the days of fighting the Indians. In the second half of the 19th century, the U.S. army had to fight large numbers of Indian groups—from different tribes and with different languages and cultures—of which there were almost as many as there were ethnic groups in the world. It had the job of hunting them down and fighting them in small numbers and unconventional conditions.”¹⁴ If the military is to be effective in such conflicts and remain relevant to U.S. national security, it must learn to better utilize military forces in these types of operations. The cornerstone of any strategy for building appropriate force structures to engage weak/failing states will require a long-term national commitment to an international agenda.

To accomplish this task, the U.S. needs to reexamine its post-World War Two strategic thought. The most crucial item the second Bush administration must accomplish is to “explain what the United States is doing about state failure and why it matters. A broadly defined policy couched in terms of the full range of American interests and values has some chance of becoming sustainable. A narrowly defined foreign policy couched mainly in terms of military confrontation, rogues and terrorists will not garner the breadth of domestic and international support required for sustainability.”¹⁵ According to Brzezinski, “wise leadership in world affairs requires five elements: 1) rational/balanced policy of self protection, 2) patient/protracted effort to pacify the more volatile regions of the globe, 3) sustained effort to engage friendly nations in a joint framework to contain/eliminate dangers, 4) recognize globalization has a moral dimension, 5) foster a domestic political culture aware of the responsibilities inherent in global interdependence.”¹⁶ The United States has effectively implemented element one. However, patience, long-term commitment, global

engagement, and public education are lacking. We must better understand U.S. foreign policy and this policy must be executed with continuity over the long term.

In 1947, George Kennan, the U.S. Ambassador to Russia wrote the “X-article” in *Foreign Affairs* that described the world’s security environment and then outlined the U.S. strategy for containing communism over what turned out to be the next 50 years. Engaging weak/failing states, like containment in the Cold War, will require a global strategy and a long-term commitment. The National Security Strategy presents some key ideas for a weak/failing state engagement plan: “We will defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.”¹⁷ Furthermore, President Bush reiterated the call for an endeavor of Cold War proportions in his second inaugural address when he said, “The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world...America’s vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one...it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”¹⁸ With these words, President Bush announced the “great objective of ending tyranny as the concentrated work of generations.”¹⁹ Bush’s call for a Cold War like struggle is not new. A 2003 RAND report highlights this fact:

The fight against terrorist groups with local reach, in short, looks more like a long “twilight conflict,” as the Cold War was once described, than a series of operations involving U.S. forces in sustained or large scale combat operations. This is not to say that the fight will be easy or risk-free; far from it. But it will call for capabilities that have not, by and large, been at the forefront of U.S. planning and resource allocation for large-scale combat operations.”²⁰

The goal of the U.S. is not to conquer territory in such a “conflict”, it is to provide security, ensure delivery of economic aid/humanitarian assistance, and assist local governments with solving their own problems.

An “X-Article” strategy provides the Nation and the military much-needed guidelines for action. Buy-in from the American public, successive administrations and the international community is essential to successful engagement with weak/failing states. The American public must understand the strategy beyond the tactical military goals of striking terrorists or states that harbor them. As was done at the outset of the cold war, “the president must do more than stir the American people; he must also educate them.”²¹ The American public and the international community must also understand that the GWOT will be long, like the Cold War, and will mean worldwide engagement in weak/failing states. This engagement will require a sustained military presence overseas in order to transform weak/failing states into functioning parts of the international community.

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¹ NSS, 1

² Susan E. Rice. “The New National Security Strategy: Focus on Failed States.” *The Brookings Institution Policy Brief #116* (February 2003), 1

³ Max Boot. *The Savage Wars of Peace* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002), 350

⁴ Thomas P.M. Barnett. “The Pentagon’s New Map.” *Esquire*, (March 2003), 174

⁵ *Ibid.*, 174

⁶ Arthur K. Cebrowski, Director, Force Transformation. Briefing. Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, AL, 22 September 2004

⁷ Hammes, *The Sling and The Stone*, 9

⁸ USMC. *Small Wars Manual (Draft)*. (Washington D.C.: Department of the Navy, 2003), 6

⁹ Martin van Crevold. “Through A Glass Darkly.” *Naval War College Review* (Autumn 2000), 42

¹⁰ “The phrase, ‘fight and win the nation’s wars’ is used increasingly to more narrowly define the purpose of the U.S. military. It appears to have its origins in the Army in the post-Vietnam era; but the phrase is now invoked as an enduring truth, obvious to all. However, more than 200 years of U.S. history suggest that the military has always been used to do much more than fight and win the nation’s wars.” Carl H. Builder and Theodore W. Karasik. *Organizing, Training, and Equipping the Air Force for Crises and Lesser Conflicts* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1995), 23

¹¹ Tom Clancy, General Tony Zinni; and Tony Koltz. *Battle Ready* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2004), 433

¹² Michael Howard. “When Are Wars Decisive?” *Survival* (vol. 41, no. 1, Spring 1999), 132

¹³ USMC. *Small Wars Manual*, 10

¹⁴ Trudy Kuehner. “Robert Kaplan on the New Middle East.” *FPRI* (December 2004). Available from <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/20041217.middleeast.kaplanr.newmiddleeast.html>

¹⁵ Chester A. Crocker. “Engaging Failing States.” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no 5,

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September/October 2003), 43

¹⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski. *The Choice* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2004), 219

¹⁷ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2002), Presidential Cover Letter page 1

¹⁸ George W. Bush. "Second Inaugural Address." (20 January 2005). Available from <http://whitehouse.gov>

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ David Ochmanek. *Military Operations Against Terrorist Groups Abroad* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), 33

²¹ Brzezinski, *The Choice*, 219

The American Way of War or Battle?

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish . . . the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.

—Carl von Clausewitz

Each of the services has its own dominant image of the next major war for which it must (or wants to) be prepared to fight. That image is the one that defines (or reflects) the essence of the service—who it is and what it is about. There may be other images of war, other contingencies or missions, for which the service must be prepared, but they do not occupy that central position of importance, urgency, or priority that goes to the heart of the institution.

—Carl Builder

“The dominant concepts of war held by military institutions have a significant effect upon the kinds of forces they acquire and train and, therefore, upon the kinds of wars they are prepared to fight.”¹ The current military culture throughout the Department of Defense (DoD) has a “big war” mindset. Specifically, the U.S. military is designed for and prefers to focus on fighting big interstate conflicts. From World War II through Desert Storm, the U.S. built and refined a force to counter a peer or near-peer competitor. In the 1990s, the U.S. continued to improve its threat-driven warfighting capability focused on destroying the forces and/or leadership of nation-states despite being involved in numerous MOOTW operations. This mindset was also accompanied by the Weinburger/Powell doctrine that suggests the military only fight wars for vital national interests with clear objectives and exit strategies using overwhelming force. In 2000, a study conducted by Rizer “showed through survey data and the military’s acceptance of the Weinburger Doctrine that the Pentagon’s worldview is one of conservative realism...the military was much less supportive of foreign policy goals related to human rights, humanitarian concerns,

and international cooperation...”² Additionally, the assertion made in the 2001 NSS that the U.S. must build and maintain defenses beyond challenge serves as an enabler to proponents of high-tech warfare against peer competitors. These perspectives have led the military to resist operations not related to combat because they do not mesh with their preferred way of war.³

In his article “Toward an American Way of War,” LTC Antulio Echevarria describes the theories of Russell Weigley and Max Boot regarding the American Way of War. According to Echevarria, Weigley “concluded that the American style of waging war centered primarily on the idea of achieving a crushing military victory over an opponent.”⁴ Additionally, Echevarria observes that Boot augments the Weigley thesis by reminding us that Americans also waged small wars that did not necessarily involve the overthrow of an opponent.⁵ Regardless of whether the U.S. is engaged in large or small wars, Echevarria writes that Weigley and Boot would agree that “the American way of war tends to shy away from thinking about the complicated process of turning military triumphs into military successes.”⁶ Echevarria then argues that the “new American way of war” is one “geared to fight wars as if they were battles and, thus, confuses the winning of campaigns or small-scale contingencies with the winning of wars.”⁷ Cassidy appears to confirm Echevarria’s “American Way of Battle” thesis when he said,

U.S. military culture embraced the big conventional war paradigm and fundamentally eschewed small wars and insurgencies. Thus, instead of learning from our experiences in Vietnam, the Philippines, the Marine Corps’ experiences in the Banana Wars and the Indian campaigns, the US Army [and the USAF] for most of the last 100 years has viewed these experiences as ephemeral anomalies and aberrations—distractions from preparing to win the big wars against other big powers. As a result of marginalizing the counterinsurgencies and small wars that it has spent most of its existence prosecuting, the US military’s big-war cultural preferences have impeded it from fully benefiting—studying, distilling, and incorporating into doctrine—from our somewhat extensive lessons in small wars and insurgencies.⁸

RAND analyst Brian Jenkins concurred with this assessment when he wrote that in the “armed forces, there is still a tendency to view the current situation as an anomaly—as the ‘other

war’ as opposed to the ‘real war,’ as missions to be consigned to specialized units rather than to main forces, as opportunities to gain valuable field experience but not a compelling argument to radically alter how we organize to fight.”⁹ As a result of this failure to accept a change to its roles and missions the military has in essence forced its members to practice for football only to find out in the enemy stadium that the opponent is playing soccer. The fact that the U.S. has spent the last fifteen years participating in more “anomalies” than “real wars” and that the prospects for the future are more of the same, illustrates the need for increased focus on MOOTW and less on MCO. As a start, the primary form of MOOTW to be studied is war termination and conflict resolution.

An excellent modern day example of the failure to focus on MOOTW is the execution of war termination/conflict resolution operations in Iraq. When President Bush declared the end of major combat operations on 3 May 2003, the U.S. began performing MOOTW in what has come to be termed Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) II. It is in this phase that past military resistance to the study of MOOTW has resulted in unnecessary difficulty in achieving national objectives. Anthony Cordesman listed 38 termination/resolution problems that could have been avoided by the U.S. in the 2003 Iraq War. His bottom-line assessment was that “these failures did much to create a climate of continuing violence after May 1 and to create the threat of low-intensity and asymmetric warfare. To an important degree, they contributed to the killing or wounding of every U.S. soldier, British soldier, and Iraqi civilian that became a casualty in the months following the “end” of the war.”¹⁰

The way the U.S. military fights affects the context of settlement. “Military victories do not themselves determine the outcome of wars; they only provide political opportunities for the victors.”¹¹ It is not the intent of our military to create worse conditions following combat but our

military tends to “shy away from thinking about the complicated process of turning military triumphs into strategic successes.”¹² While the ability to fight battles and maintaining the capability to fight big force on force engagements is prudent, the ability to wage the peace is just as vital to every conflict large or small. Of the 38 items listed by Cordesman, two items have special importance. “One is the failure at the highest policy levels to give conflict termination the proper priority. The second is the failure by the U.S. military to properly recognize the importance of making conflict termination and the transition to nation building a critical part of its doctrine and planning for asymmetric warfare.”¹³ Fortunately, it appears President Bush has outlined the national policy for the next four years. It is the duty of the military, to include the USAF, to provide the capabilities to achieve the goals of that policy.

Notes

¹ Carl H. Builder. *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 127

² Kenneth R. Rizer. *Military Resistance to Humanitarian War in Kosovo and Beyond: An Ideological Explanation* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2000), 31

³ “Since the early 1990s, the U.S. military has resisted prolonged involvement in S&R operations for reasons ranging from concern for the degradation of combat readiness and diversion of limited resources to a belief that these operations are not the role of the military. Military leaders feared that training, equipping, and planning for S&R operations would detract from warfighting capabilities. These concerns stem from Vietnam and were reinforced by problems with peace operations in the 1990s, especially Somalia. Failure in Somalia had a profound impact on the American military and political psyche: no longer would the United States use the military to do nation-building. In the future, the United States would require clearly stated, achievable objectives before conducting any peace or humanitarian operation, and its role would only be to provide security. Another side effect of the U.S. experience in Somalia was the growing notion that the military’s primary mission should always be to fight and win the nation’s wars rather than become embroiled in difficult, prolonged peace and stability operations. Despite a cultural reluctance to participate in peace and stability operations, the U.S. military found itself doing just that throughout the 1990s, which reinforced antipathy to such operations.” Hans Binnendijk and Stuart E. Johnson. *Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations* (Washington D.C.: Center for Technology and National Security Policy, 2004), 87

⁴ Antulio J. Echevarria II. “Toward An American Way of War.” (*SSI Paper* 2004), v

⁵ Ibid., 7

⁶ Ibid., vi

⁷ Ibid., vi

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⁸ Robert M. Cassidy. “Back to the Street without Joy: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam and Other Small Wars.” *Parameters*, (Summer 2004), 74

⁹ Brian Michael Jenkins. “Redefining the Enemy: The World Has Changed, But Our Mindset Has Not.” (RAND Review, Spring 2004), 23

¹⁰ Anthony H. Cordesman. *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons* (Washington D.C.: CSIS Press, 2003), 504

¹¹ Howard, “When Are Wars Decisive?”, 130

¹² Antulio J. Echevarria II, “An American Way of War or Battle?” *Strategic Studies Newsletter* (January 2004)

¹³ Cordesman, *The Iraq War*, 504

The Icarus Syndrome: USAF Relevancy

The Air force, conceived by the theorists of air power as an independent and decisive instrument of warfare, sees itself as the embodiment of an idea, a concept of warfare, a strategy made possible and sustained by modern technology. The bond is not an institution, but the love of flying machines and flight.

—Carl Builder

The USAF must leverage its entire portfolio of capabilities, both flying and non-flying to meet our nation's needs in the GWOT. This paper proposes that the USAF must first address three challenges. The first is the same challenge that all the armed services face—the “big war” mindset. A second challenge for the USAF is to change its cultural bias in favor of combat flying over all other USAF missions. Finally, the Air Force must codify these changes into doctrine and education. Using airplanes enabled by unmanned vehicles, information technologies, space systems and precision guided munitions, the USAF has revolutionized warfare. In the future, these same unmanned vehicles, information technologies and space systems may become the primary contribution of the USAF to the fight against terrorists.

“Large organizations like the USAF adapt very slowly if at all to changes in the security environment. This is especially true when the change lies outside the scope of conventional war.”¹ In 1992, RAND conducted a workshop entitled Expanding U.S. Air Force Noncombat Mission Capabilities. The purpose of the workshop was to identify noncombat capabilities needed for the USAF to respond to four hypothetical scenarios. Instead of identifying capabilities to conduct these types of operations, many USAF participants argued the merit of performing noncombat missions at all. Instead of fulfilling the purpose of the workshop, the RAND team found itself confronted with an unexpected institutional resistance. The conference organizers found themselves with a group sharply divided into two camps. The first being that the basic mission of the USAF is to fight, all

others missions reduce this capability. This view is only valid if one believes the basic mission of the USAF to be fighting. “No nation goes to war to fight. It goes to war to attain its national purpose.”² Further, attaining the national purpose in the 21st century will require more skill sets than just fighting. The other argument was that the USAF should expand the concept of itself into a force capable of superiority across the growing mission spectrum. Key to this second argument’s view was the notion that “the nation’s needs are changing and that, as a servant of the nation, the Air Force should broaden its vision beyond traditional combat roles.”³ Thirteen years later, rapid decisive operations using stealth and precision remain the USAF’s focus. It remains a major challenge for USAF leaders to consider assets other than fighters or bombers as primary contributors in future operations. Any search for a new service identity will require serious reflection on USAF culture.

The USAF has traditionally seen “flying and fighting” as its reason for being and its “identity is based largely on its organizational and conceptual history and the primacy of the technology over warfighting theory. These lead to a culture in which small, often technology-based, subcultures flourish.”⁴ In this environment, bomber pilots and later fighter pilots became the senior leaders of the air force. Under combat pilot control, the USAF has “identified itself with the air weapon, and rooted itself in a commitment to technological superiority. The dark side of this commitment is that it becomes transformed into an end in itself when aircraft or systems, rather than missions, become the primary focus. Identity in the Air Force has become associated with a specific airplane rather than the institution or military art, with a resulting weaker sense of community than the other services.”⁵ Further, the Air Force sees “war as science, not art, and are disposed to treat it as such. Despite using terminology stressing strategic effects, the military still tends to focus on outputs (keeping score on targets) instead of on outcomes (the effects they seek to achieve).”⁶ A transformed air force where airlifters, special ops pilots or even non-rated officers could ascend to

leadership of the service would be very difficult for the fighter/bomber cultures to visualize. Furthermore, while senior leaders may recognize the necessity to champion all capabilities in which the service excels, they will find it difficult to see the USAF employed in a way different from “flying and fighting.” Nevertheless, it is imperative USAF leadership not forget that serving the nation is the primary reason for a separate service, not to field fighters or bombers. Donald Mrozek’s description of gunship development during the Vietnam war is illustrative of the Air Force mindset: “slower aircraft implied subordination to the ground effort and ground commanders; faster aircraft implied more autonomous air operations...The challenge was to improve performance today without damaging doctrine and the services interests tomorrow.”⁷ In other words, innovation is risky—it’s okay to build a capability as long as it does not change the USAF’s preferred means of doing business. The history of airpower since World War II provides examples of how the institution’s views of war and culture have combined to limit the effectiveness of the service.

The Korean and Vietnam conflicts are examples of how the lack of flexible thought led to an inability to effectively use airpower. When the Korean War began, the primary focus of USAF thought was on conducting nuclear warfare using manned bombers against the Soviet Union. It was also believed that the threat of total nuclear war would prevent the occurrence of limited conventional wars. However, after these assumptions were proven wrong when conflict broke out on the Korean peninsula, the U.S. fell back on its previous doctrine of strategic bombing. Unfortunately, this doctrine was not appropriate for the theater in which the U.S. found itself. Strategic bombing is only effective against societies that have industrial centers to bomb. Korea had very few such centers. Once the few strategic targets were destroyed, the Air Force was left with no strategy to pursue. Furthermore, classical strategic bombing theory did not provide insight into how to handle an enemy who receives its war making capability from third party nations. Interdiction was the next theory attempted in the Korean theater. These efforts at interdiction

resulted in technologies such as those that enabled the U.S. to bomb by radar. In addition, since the U.S. was not supposed to have to fight limited wars, there was no organization able to coordinate the proper use of all air forces. At the end of the Korean conflict, valuable lessons for applying air power in a limited fashion were discarded as being irrelevant to the nuclear strategy of the nation.⁸ This disregard of limited war lessons come back to haunt the U.S. in Vietnam.

When the U.S. entered the Vietnam conflict, it was not prepared to effectively fight a limited war. Since nuclear confrontation between the U.S. and USSR remained foremost in the minds of the USAF, tactical aircraft were designed to intercept Soviet nuclear bombers or deliver tactical nuclear weapons rather than carry out a conventional war. Further, tactical air forces in the early 1960s received minimal training on conventional weapons and tactics. The result was the wrong technology based on inflexible thought to prosecute the war. Additionally, as in Korea, no organizational structure was designed to present/employ force in a conventional conflict because conventional conflict was seen as unlikely. When assets were placed in a conventional role in Southeast Asia, there was no organization built to coordinate and employ all air forces in theater. USAF aircraft belonged to 7 AF and SAC while the Navy controlled Navy aircraft. As a result, the Route Package system divided Vietnam into areas where each service could bomb. This system deconflicted friendly forces but did nothing to build a coordinated air campaign or take advantage of synergies. The outcome of this second failed attempt at air operations in a limited role resulted in conventional theories such as Air-Land Battle or parallel operations that placed conventional capabilities at the forefront. Some technology resulting from this thought included precision weapons, stealth and tactical aircraft capable of performing multi-roles. These new capabilities coupled with the idea of a single air boss came together to produce allied victory in Desert Storm. Since 1991, the U.S. entered into what

seemed to be a period of "simmering peace," we increased our attention on being able to conduct military operations other than war. In many cases, this required

developing special capabilities that we had previously assumed were lesser abilities residing within our threat-based force structure. More so than ever before, our military today must be able to conduct operations across the full spectrum- from nuclear deterrence and high-end conventional warfare to lower-end, yet potentially volatile, peacekeeping, humanitarian, and noncombatant-evacuation operations- and it must have the capability to execute those operations rapidly, anywhere in the world.⁹

Despite the recognition by some that the USAF needed to focus on the full spectrum of conflict, challenges still existed. As Poyner observed,

our problem is that our philosophical underpinnings—what I call the force-centered view of airpower—will no longer serve the Air force in the next century because the nature of international conflict is changing in ways Mitchell and his contemporaries could not envision.”¹⁰

The preferred way of war coupled with USAF service bias has manifested itself in doctrine that limited the way air force personnel viewed the contributions of their entire service.

“Airpower doctrine has lagged behind fast-moving developments in the U.S. OOTW experience.”¹¹ Although “we’re accustomed to seeing doctrine grow, evolve and mature, particularly where doctrine applies to what we care about—our traditional roles and missions in the mainstream of the Air Force. We seem to have more difficulty, however, with nurturing doctrine off the mainstream roles and missions.”¹² This is not a new problem for the USAF. In 1986, Dr William Olsen described a problem with Air Force low-intensity conflict doctrine that still holds true today when he said,

Tactical air doctrine and the attending force structure are designed for conventional wars against conventional enemies. In most low-intensity conflict situations, control of the air is established by default, while isolation of the battlefield, where there are few and fleeting fixed battles, is a non sequitur. The use of high-speed, high-performance aircraft and heavy ordnance, like the indiscriminant use of long-range artillery, is counterproductive. Targets are difficult to identify, distinguishing friend from foe is largely a matter of chance, and time on station is too ephemeral. What are needed are slow planes that can be directed discriminately by ground observers who have an understanding of the situation. The air platform needs to be stable, tough, inexpensive, and easily maintained and operated in an austere environment.”¹³

Olsen clearly illustrates the bias toward high-tech combat forces at the expense of capabilities needed in other parts of the conflict spectrum. If most of the USAF efforts are put toward conventional war doctrine, what is the result on MOOTW doctrine?

USAF doctrine does little to advocate air and space power in MOOTW scenarios. AFDD 1 *Air Force Basic Doctrine* mentions MOOTW only in the context of USAF ability to operate across the spectrum of conflict. Further, the document focuses on battle or supporting the battle. A clear example of this battle focus is that the principles of war are included in the document while the MOOTW principles are not.¹⁴ AFDD 2 *Organization and Employment of Aerospace Power* does a better job of describing how air and space power contributes to MOOTW missions. There are nine pages of the document dedicated to conflict termination, peacetime engagement/crisis response and deterrence/contingency actions. This document offers the best description of how air and space power is used to conduct MOOTW outside of specific MOOTW doctrine.

The two USAF doctrine documents focused on MOOTW missions are: AFDD 2-3 *Military Operation Other Than War* and AFDD 2-3.1 *Foreign Internal Defense* (FID). AFDD 2-3 does very little to create the kind of culture in the Air Force that embraces these missions. Essentially, AFDD 2-3 serves only to define MOOTW missions. The document is very general in nature with few Air Force specific examples. Unlike the *USMC Small Wars Manual* that focuses on mindset creation/change, AFDD 2-3 does nothing more than describe MOOTW missions. AFDD 2-3.1 on the other hand, provides a more detailed tool for conducting FID operations. Specific air and space power functions needed for FID are clearly identified and chapters on planning and employment provide good detail on the conduct of operations. Unfortunately, the detail included in this document has not been mirrored for any of the other specific MOOTW missions.

Other documents that could advocate more robust approaches to MOOTW include the Air Force vision, USAF CONOPS, the Transformation Flight Plan and congressional testimonies.

Unfortunately, none of these documents addresses MOOTW as a primary responsibility for the USAF. The USAF Vision *Global Vigilance, Reach and Power* mentions utilizing air and space power across the full spectrum of conflict but does not go any farther with regard to recognizing MOOTW operations as a primary mission for the service. Likewise, all USAF CONOPS lean toward combat or direct support to combat. There is no CONOPS for stability operations to complement the joint operating concept efforts. The *Transformation Flight Plan* mentions operations across the full spectrum but looks at technology as the primary vehicle for change with its primary focus on better prosecution of combat operations. “Doctrine must be incorporated into our thinking and operations while at the same time developing service wide capabilities to support these operations.”¹⁵ While MOOTW doctrine is important, equally important is how that doctrine is first taught to the force and then how the forces are organized to conduct MOOTW operations.

James Corum, former instructor at the USAF School for Advanced Air and Space Power Studies (SAASS), observed: “U.S. military schools are mired in curricula better suited for conventional war than the types of unconventional wars likely to be fought in the next decades. There is very little history, theory, or doctrine on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism taught in the U.S. military staff colleges today.”¹⁶ The Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) currently provides a solid foundation in National Security and Strategy. However, ACSC only provides part of the skill sets required by USAF officers to meet today’s challenges. There is a bias in favor of major combat as evidenced in the emphasis on the strategic forms of annihilation and attrition. In academic year 04-05 at the ACSC, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) examples were used primarily for their combat lessons learned. In many cases, these operations were discussed in the past tense rather than as ongoing operations. In the Strategy and War and Airpower courses, only one lesson in each was spent on small wars. The National Security course used Bosnia as an example of coercive airpower rather than an historical example of

effective U.S. peacekeeping operations. SAASS appears to be doing better in educating MOOTW. SAASS students received a 15-day course on low-intensity conflict as part of their year long program. Unfortunately, SAASS only educates approximately 30 officers per year so the chance of their MOOTW education impacting the force is fairly small.

Currently, the primary focus of the USAF is to conduct force on force engagements. The majority of thought is directed toward reducing the kill chain and the ability to more effectively strike an enemy. These battlefield operations are necessary but may not represent the primary needs of the nation. A larger force of intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) and airlift assets, long credited as vital to the prosecution of small wars, may be the capability essential for the type of operations the Air Force will be conducting in the future. During the Cold War, there were numerous bomber and ICBM bases prepared to fight a nuclear war. Today, there are only three bomber bases and three ICBM bases. The U.S. chose to retain some nuclear capability as a hedge against a nuclear-armed opponent but the vast majority of its technology and organizational structure is focused on conventional warfare. Just as the Air Force balanced the nuclear and conventional force structure in favor of conventional forces, the Air Force must now think about tailoring its conventional forces between major combat operations capability and those needed for MOOTW.

For the USAF to stay relevant in the conflicts of this century, it must embrace the fact that the contribution of air and space power can be both flying and non-flying, combat and non-combat. In 1994, Carl Builder wrote, “air power must somehow be defined as more than force, airplanes or pilots” and “air power will require the projection of infrastructures such as security, medical care, communication and transportation.”¹⁷ Fortunately, the air force is prepared now to meet the requirements of both forces if it allows much needed innovation to occur. Airlift, special operations, unmanned aerial vehicles, intelligence capabilities and space systems are already present

in the field. The challenge now is not to figure a way to get the enemy to fight our kind of war against our preferred vision of warfighting (fighters and bombers); the challenge is to leverage our other capabilities to contribute to the fight. The USAF needs to focus on the history of MOOTW with an eye toward doctrine creation. Before we can build the organization to better execute MOOTW, we must first educate the force. “Military leaders must habituate themselves to thinking more thoroughly about how to turn combat successes into favorable strategic outcomes.”¹⁸

Notes

¹ Robert M. Cassidy. “Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya: Military Strategic Culture and the Paradoxes of Asymmetric Conflict.” *SSI Paper* (February 2003), 3

² Alexander, *How Great Generals Win*, 30

³ Carl Builder, Robert Lempert, Kevin Lewis, Eric Larson, and Milton Weiner. *Report of a Workshop on Expanding U.S. Air Force Noncombat Mission Capabilities* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992), xiii

⁴ William C. Thomas. “The Cultural Identity of the United States Air Force.” *Air and Space Power Chronicles* (January 2004). Available from <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/cc/Thomas.html>

⁵ Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, 6

⁶ Grant T. Hammond. *The Mind of War: John Boyd and American Security* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Books, 2001), 207

⁷ Donald J. Mrozek. “The Limits of Innovation: Aspects of Air Power in Vietnam.” *Air University Review* (January/February 1985), 61

⁸ “US airmen have long been known for their fascination with technology and the mental toughness required to press home a bombing attack against fierce resistance or outduel an enemy fighter. In addition, US airmen have never been known for their academic inquisitiveness, their devotion to the study of the art of war, or to their contributions to the theory of airpower. Instead, American airmen have been “doers” rather than introspective “thinkers.” Nowhere was that more evident than in the U.S. Air Force approach to the problem of protracted revolutionary warfare. Wedded to the concept of “atomic airpower” during the 1950s and early 1960s, American airmen virtually ignored the insurgent warfare problem until they were thrust into the Vietnam War. “After the American withdrawal from Vietnam, bitter memories, confusion about the impact of strategic bombing on the war’s end, disagreement over the very nature of the conflict, and the continuing Soviet threat made it all too easy for US airmen to push the unsettled protracted warfare enigma into the background. It was much more comfortable to retreat to the familiar problems of strategic nuclear warfare and conventional warfare in Europe. The problem would not go away—Afghanistan, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, and other problem areas forced the subject to the surface in the 1980s, and some airmen began to investigate seriously the peculiarities of airpower application in insurgent warfare.” Drew, Dennis M. “U.S. Airpower Theory and the Insurgent Challenge: A Short Journey to Confusion.” *The Journal of Military History* (October 1998), 831

⁹ Gregory S. Martin. “U.S. National Security Strategy and the Imperative of Geopresence.” *Air and Space Power Journal* (Summer 2003), 36

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¹⁰ D. Robert Poyner. "Childhood's End: A Personal View of the Future of Airpower and the Air Force." (*Air Power Journal*, Summer 1996), 114

¹¹ John Hillen. "Peacekeeping at the Speed of Sound: The Relevancy of Airpower Doctrine in Operations other than War." *Aerospace Power Journal* (Winter 1998), 13

¹² Carl H. Builder. "Doctrinal Frontiers." *Airpower Journal* (Winter 1995), 7

¹³ William J. Olsen. "Air Power in Low-Intensity Conflict in The Middle East." *Air University Review*. (March/April 1986), 17

¹⁴ The MOOTW principles include: objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance and legitimacy.

¹⁵ William T. Eliason. "USAF Support to Low-Intensity Conflict: Three Case Studies from the 1980s." (*SAASS Paper*, 1994), 71

¹⁶ James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson. *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 439

¹⁷ Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, 262

¹⁸ Echevarria, "Toward An American Way of War," 17

Recommendations

The question of whether or not we should be involved in these operations is widely debated. When I sat down and counted up how many I have been involved with them in my career, I soon realized that this question has been overtaken by events. We are involved in them; and the question I want to answer is how to do them better.

—General Tony Zinni

From 1850-1905, Japan transformed its military to compete better with Western power presence in Asia. At the beginning of this effort, Japan had to struggle with the fact that their Shogun way of war was not adequate to challenge Western military power. The struggle to develop a Western style army was resisted but eventually, the increasing threat drove the reason for change. Once the concept of building a Western style army was adopted, the Japanese began to adapt their organizations and people to operate within the new paradigm. Western military capabilities such as artillery and rifles were easier to procure than the cultural change required accepting their use. Like the Japanese, the U.S. military resisted MOOTW missions by remaining completely committed to nuclear deterrence and theater conventional warfare through the 1990s. This commitment decreases the effectiveness of the USAF to combat the enemies of today.

In the 21st Century, the contingency operation has become the USAF's primary means of protecting and projecting U.S. interests.¹ The most frequent military mission of the 21st Century will not be major combat operations but operations in all other areas of the conflict spectrum. A discussion of the nation's long-term assumptions about defense procurement, training and doctrine is needed. "Although the United States has been repeatedly pulled into small wars against bands of guerillas—from the Philippines a century ago to Somalia a decade ago—the military has tended to deemphasize these conflicts in its institutional memory. When the preeminent mission of the U.S. Army was to combat Native American insurgencies, "the generals always viewed the Indian wars as

a temporary diversion from their ‘real job’—preparing to fight a conventional army.”² In the 21st Century, we must not view MCO as the real job versus the diversion of MOOTW. The leaders we need today need to be decisive across the range of military operations and be able to transition quickly and effectively from MOOTW to MCO back to MOOTW. To do this, we must transform our military culture by building a force more educated in MOOTW and nation building. To reach this end, the USAF must transform its preferred way of war to better win the peace by identifying needed changes in concepts, education, organizations, and capabilities.

The main concept needed by the USAF in the 21st Century is a theory of air and space power that is more inclusive of all USAF disciplines and embraces a range of military operations. The current theory based on strategic bombing gives the service no room to grow as it transitions from doing mostly combat operations to doing mostly MOOTW operations. Like other bureaucracies, “the most important institutional interest of air forces is the maintenance of institutional independence and autonomy. Of the three main air combat missions—air superiority, tactical bombing, and strategic bombing—strategic bombing serves this interest best because it is an inherently independent mission, requiring little coordination with other services.”³ The challenge for the USAF is to remake itself into a service that provides robust capabilities across the range of military operations. Such a theory should include Poyner’s view of the USAF of the future that “provides service to the nation: *the application of long-range, short notice, strategic influence*. Many of the non-traditional taskings the Air Force has been involved in recently (e.g. humanitarian relief, peacekeeping and peacemaking, counternarcotics, etc.) nestle quite well under the framework of projecting influence.” [emphasis in original]⁴

Projecting influence requires decisive operations across the entire spectrum of conflict. The use of precision guided munitions and stealth technology have revolutionized war fighting. Unfortunately, non-state adversaries have very little infrastructure to attack. The U.S. currently

enjoys air supremacy over Iraq and has the ability to employ ordnance from the air wherever and whenever it chooses. However, the application of combat air power has had little effect in stopping the attacks by insurgents. “Exclusive reliance on technology, at once naïve and arrogant, takes little account of local history, traditions, terrain, and other factors that are essential for making wise judgments.”⁵ The approach to the threats of the future must be broader than technological solutions. Through the mediums of air and space, the USAF “can apply many sophisticated tools of influence and utility—not just bombs and bullets and can do so not just for the AF, but for all the military services and indeed, the nation.”⁶ One example of a vital USAF tool of influence is airlift. “Delivering supplies is seen as a means to an end, not as an independent end in itself. So, even where logistical efforts are more substantial than the combat operations, it is the combat operations that will be most remembered for lessons learned.”⁷ This bias is one that must be eliminated through renewed educational efforts.

The goal of USAF professional military education (PME) should be to provide officers the foundation to make intelligent decisions across the entire spectrum of conflict. Given the direction U.S. foreign policy is heading, USAF PME institutions must more thoroughly examine the history of U.S. experiences with constabulary, nation building and counterinsurgency operations. Without emphasis on learning MOOTW, the USAF runs the risk of marginalizing its capabilities at best and becoming irrelevant at worst. By educating our officers, we plant the seeds that will one day provide a force that is organized, trained and equipped to be as decisive in MOOTW as it is in MCO.

The greatest challenge in the near-future will be to think more expansively and creatively about how to apply air and space power in future MOOTW.

Professional military education can play a central role in changing the military’s cultural mindset and in developing the broad intellectual framework necessary for these demanding, complex, and multidisciplinary situations. The first step in achieving a change in culture is to demonstrate importance of S&R operations in

American national security strategy through courses or lectures and by emphasizing these themes throughout the curricula. Because stabilization and reconstruction operations have often been viewed as separate and detracting from the military's primary warfighting mission, PME curricula have dedicated limited time to its study.⁸

In the future, the military in general and the USAF in particular must build as solid a foundation in MOOTW as they do for traditional combat operations. As the U.S. increasingly becomes involved in conflicts with weak/failing states, "Instruction related to stabilization and reconstruction operations should be incorporated at all levels of PME, from officer basic courses through senior-level war colleges, as well as non-commissioned officer education, service academies, and ROTC programs. Students need to be exposed to these topics from the beginning of their careers to build the appropriate mindset and necessary skills."⁹ Where does the military turn for educational examples prudent to the kind of war we're waging today?

The answers lie within our own history. For examples of stability operations, PME students could study the occupation of the South after the Civil War as well as the occupations of Germany, Japan and Iraq. For peace enforcement examples, the student could study the American Indian wars. Peacekeeping examples can be found on the Kansas plains of the 1850s or in Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990s. Counterinsurgency lessons can be studied from the early 1960s in Southeast Asia or the low-intensity conflicts in Central America during the 1980s. Small war examples can be found beginning with the Barbary pirates during Jefferson's presidency through current operations in 2005. Moreover, the USAF has a substantial history of MOOTW as well. The USAF has conducted MOOTW operations from the Berlin airlift in the 1940s to counter-drug ISR in Columbia and humanitarian airlift operations to Somalia and Haiti in the 1990s. It is not that we are without precedents to study. It is that the U.S. military would rather teach Napoleon and the few examples of large wars (American Civil War and the World Wars) than the numerous, yet less glamorous small wars and operations.

When we redefine the meaning of war, we can also redefine the meaning of heroic victories. Physical courage in battle is important in large and small wars. But, the moral courage to see a conflict through to the better state of peace when that condition may take a decade or more is the mark of an excellent “war” leader. We should create distinctions between war and battle. “Our opponents will not focus on swift battlefield victories. They will take the long view and focus on winning wars, not battles.”¹⁰ To change the military mindset could mean that “military planners might choose to consider the initial conventional combat phase as the shaping phase, rather than the decisive phase. In such a case, the stability phase might then be planned as the decisive phase. In short, if our political objectives can only be accomplished after a successful stability phase, then the stability phase is really the decisive phase.”¹¹ In an attempt to make this theory actionable to a military culture mainly focused on combat, new ways of thinking about history could be used. For example, instead of viewing World War II as a war lasting from 1939-1945, we could teach it as a war from 1939-1952. In essence, 1939-1945 was when major combat operations (the battles) occurred while 1945-1952 is when reconstruction and state building occurred. By fixing the end of the war in 1945, we discount perhaps the most vital point to waging war—establishing a better state of peace. Thinking in these terms forces the military to accept that there are valid military operations across the spectrum of conflict and each is valuable depending on the task. Educated officers and civilian leaders who accept and understand the use of military forces across the spectrum of conflict will in turn produce the doctrine necessary to change the USAF organization.

The USAF is not currently optimized for the challenges inherent to operations other than war. The Nation’s interests lie in deploying a force more like the Texas Rangers than the combat infantrymen of World War Two. “Rangers were good at tracking and apprehending fugitives. They were good at mediating between contending factions, such as family against family, political bloc against political bloc, labor against management, and mob against antimob. They were good at

easing public excitement and heading off prospective riots. They were good at maintaining orderly courtrooms. And they were good at taming places where rowdies gathered.”¹² Thomas Barnett’s vision for such a force has the military create two new forces, the leviathan force and the system administration force. According to Barnett, the regional combatant commanders (RCC) would lead the system administration force and serve as “precinct captains.” The RCC would have the responsibility to ensure the military plays a role in the political process by contributing the necessary security to allow for positive end states to conflict. The functional commands would administer the Leviathan force and play the role of the SWAT team. The system administrator force is the “cop on the beat” and carries out missions throughout the entire spectrum of conflict. The Leviathan force moves in for the war portion and then transitions authority back to the system administrators to continue waging the peace.¹³

To complement the new system administration force, a new societal or institutional view of post-conflict missions is needed. To build this System Administration force, the USAF must advocate an increase in the study of small wars, peacekeeping and nation building in PME schools. Without this focused study of these situations, our forces face in the field, our officers come prepared to fight a different war than the one actually occurring. Max Boot provides a good view of what the nation-building role would be like for our troops,

No one expects a big city police department to win the “war on crime.” The police are considered successful if they reduce disorder, keep the criminal element at bay, and allow decent people a chance to live their lives in peace. In the process, a few cops are likely to die, and while this is a tragedy to be mourned, no one suggests that as a result the police should go home and leave gangsters to run the streets.¹⁴

This policing analogy marries up very well with Barnett’s view of the regional commander as the precinct captain. The DoD should seriously consider these views as we prepare for future operations. However, it is probably more useful to use his leviathan and system administration construct as a way to think about the capabilities needed to solve the problem rather than as the

solution. “The truth is that military conflict has changed and we have been reluctant to recognize it. Defeating nation-state forces in conventional battle is not the task for the twenty-first century. Odd missions to defeat transnational threats or rebuild nations are the order of the day, but we haven’t as yet adapted.”¹⁵ There is more to winning wars than decisive combat operations.

State building rather than nation building must be the primary outcome of U.S. military intervention. “The apparatus of a functioning state can be developed much more quickly than a national consciousness. Successful state building starts by imposing the rule of law as a precondition for economic development and the eventual emergence of democracy.”¹⁶ Senior USAF leadership must embrace these new tasks for our military and strive to give our forces the best training and resources to do the job. Is the USAF preparing to meet the challenges of these conflicts?

The literature suggests that airlift, intelligence/surveillance/reconnaissance (ISR) and close air support (CAS) capabilities are the most appropriate for fighting these types of conflicts yet the AF still places more emphasis on capabilities for major combat operations.

The Air Force should expect sustained heavy demands for the following sorts of capabilities: Surveillance platforms, operators and analysts; language-qualified personnel—to help train and advise host-country forces, interact with others in-country, and analyze the intelligence “take” from HUMINT and communications intelligence (COMINT) sources; security police and other force protection assets; base operating support personnel and equipment to provide vital functions, such as communications, housing, and transportation at a wide range of locations; heliborne insertion and extraction capabilities; humanitarian relief assets, including engineers, doctors and dentists, public health specialists, tactical airlift aircraft, and crews. From time to time, USAF units will be called upon to attack terrorist targets (to include stocks of CBRN weapons) directly.¹⁷

To make a stronger contribution to the nation, the USAF must focus on the kind of capabilities needed to support special operations, military police forces and civil affairs forces. There is no doubt the USAF has the technological capability to fulfill these new missions, the biggest challenge will be to overcome the dominant service culture against employing these new capabilities as the

primary contribution. The challenge for the USAF as a service is to acknowledge that airlift, special operations, unmanned vehicles, space platforms and information operations capabilities may become more critical to fighting terrorism than fighter or bomber platforms. Large standing conventional combat forces should be realigned. Swapping combat air forces with air mobility assets from the guard/reserve may be a viable course of action. Combat air forces should provide a hedge alongside nuclear forces against a future peer competitor. Just as nuclear forces are able to increase their capability in a crisis, conventional forces must be flexible enough to surge for the large conventional conflict. The USAF should be careful not to focus so much on a peer competitor that doesn't exist in a war they might fight in the future and focus more on the war they're fighting today.

To evaluate whether new capabilities are truly relevant to the conflicts of today, Carl Builder provides some good questions to ask. "First, what does the service treasure most that might be put at risk by new roles or missions? Second, who are the elite factions in the USAF; and how might a shift in roles/missions threaten them? Finally, which offspring might the USAF throw to the wolves to save themselves?"¹⁸ At the moment, the perception is that the answers to these questions are: 1) F/A-22, 2) fighter pilots, and 3) airlift, CAS, and space. The USAF must change this perception in order to leverage all capabilities within the service. The Navy did not cease to exist as a service when the battleship lost prominence. It transformed into something else. When sea superiority (like air) was virtually a given, the Navy modified its mission to a "from the sea" perspective. Submarines haven't shot a torpedo in anger since World War II but their capabilities as an ISR and TLAM platform have kept them relevant. The USAF must nurture the same flexible mindset and find platforms with the flexibility to carry out numerous roles. Failure to match the right means to the end invites failure of air and space power to support the Nation's strategy.

Notes

¹ A. Timothy Warnock. *Short of War. Major USAF Contingency Operations* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000), xxix

² Max Boot quoted by Thomas Donnelly and Vance Serchuk. "Fighting a Global Counterinsurgency." *American Enterprise for Public Policy Research, National Security Outlook*. (December 2003), 1

³ Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 327

⁴ Poyner, "Childhood's End," 116

⁵ Robert D. Kaplan. *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2002), 127

⁶ Poyner, "Childhood's End," 116

⁷ Builder, *Organizing, Training, and Equipping the Air Force*, 54

⁸ Binnendijk, *Transforming for Stabilization*, 92

⁹ Ibid., 93

¹⁰ Hammes, *The Sling and The Stone*, 222

¹¹ USMC, *Small Wars Manual*, 5

¹² Robert M. Utley. *Lone Star Justice: The First Century of Texas Rangers* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 300

¹³ Thomas P.M. Barnett. *The Pentagon's New Map* (New York, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004), 324

¹⁴ Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace*, 346

¹⁵ Clancy, *Battle Ready*, 424

¹⁶ Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace*, 346

¹⁷ Ochmanek, David. *Military Operations Against Terrorist Groups Abroad: Implications for the United States Air Force*. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), 34

¹⁸ Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, 34

Conclusion

Machines don't fight wars. Terrain doesn't fight wars. Humans fight wars. You must get inside the minds of humans. That's where the battles are won. People, Ideas, Hardware—in that order.

—John Boyd

“No nation goes to war to fight. It goes to war to attain its national purpose.”¹ In the future, the nation in general and the military in particular must have a definition of war that is much more encompassing than MCO. This should come as no surprise to the U.S. military. If anything is surprising, it is that we apparently haven't made more progress in our adjustments to the reality of our changing security environment. Since the end of the Cold War, the military has been used for more than simply fighting the Nation's wars. President Clinton's NSS and National Military Strategy of the 1990s outlined very liberal views for engagement in the world. Couple the Clinton era's move toward liberal thought with eight years of a George W. Bush administration largely focused internationally, and the U.S. is executing a relatively consistent engagement policy with weak/failing states over a 16 year period. In other words, by the end of the second Bush presidency, the U.S. military will have been engaged primarily in MOOTW for more than 16 years.

This fact illustrates the need for the cultural change discussed earlier as well as the need for better doctrine to be created to handle these kinds of operations. “The air force has been over focused on airplanes—on combat airplanes, on manned combat airplanes, on fast manned combat airplanes—to the detriment of many systems and capabilities it should have if it is truly committed to serving the nation's interests...”² Recognition of the nation's long term priorities, will force the USAF to organize, train and equip for the future described by President Bush versus the force they

apparently prefer to build—one better suited for MCO than anything else. Continuing to focus on major combat operations at the expense of MOOTW will marginalize the USAF in the GWOT.³

What is the bottom line for the military? A change in roles and missions is needed that emphasizes preparation for MOOTW with less emphasis on combat operations. General Zinni encapsulates the challenge for the military as follows

We are going to find more and more that we have an entire region of the world—from North Africa to the Philippines and from Central Asia to Central Africa—that is chaotic and in turmoil. For decades more, we are going to be dealing with this problem. You are going to be fighting terrorists. You are going to be fighting against failed or incapable states that are sanctuaries for problems. You are going to try to rebuild nations. You are going to deal with crises and threats that threaten our people and our property. And it is all going to be mixed into one big bag.”⁴

Fortunately, General Zinni’s words seem to be indicative of policy being pursued by the Pentagon in preparation for the 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). Although major conventional war has been the focus of DoD strategy since the early 1990s, the anticipated defense strategy of the future will be one that downgrades this threat in the eyes of the Pentagon while elevating the importance of irregular threats. “DoD acknowledges it is shaping a new long-term strategy, one which observers say will shift resources away from forces needed for conventional wars—fighters, warships, tanks—toward smaller and more specialized forces optimized for guerilla war, counter terror operations and the like.”⁵ Such a shift in focus will not only redefine the priorities of the army and navy, but will threaten the usefulness of the USAF as an instrument of policy if a shift from its combat focus to one of MOOTW does not occur.

“We are very good at conventional warfare. Too bad that isn’t enough any more.”⁶ The new security environment for the 21st century is one where the American soldier must be a warrior, peacekeeper, humanitarian worker and state builder. Currently, the U.S. fields the best military in the world to fight battles. We must now expand that capability to include the type of forces that will set the post-conflict conditions that provide a long-lasting peace. Transformation will be the

vehicle to make great strides in this arena. By first understanding the new security environment and the force structure required, the DoD will be able to adopt a concept that results in the kind of force necessary to win the peace.⁷ This new structure presents challenges to U.S. military force structure and culture. This force will be known less for strategic bombing and air superiority and more for airlift, command and control, ISR and CAS operations. However, for the USAF to provide the best product to the Nation there must be a balance between the warrior force and the system administrator force. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the USAF in combating non-state terrorists is tied to its ability to leverage the capabilities of the entire institution. Thinking in terms broader than fighter and bomber capabilities will keep the USAF relevant to national security.⁸ If the USAF can transform from a force that can only win the first quarter to one that can be decisive in all four quarters, the USAF and the Nation will be well served.⁹

Notes

¹ Alexander, *How Great Generals Win*, 30

² Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, 285

³ Searle, "Making Airpower Effective against Guerillas," 22

⁴ Zinni, "Understanding What Victory Is," 33

⁵ Robert S. Dudney, "Worrying Less About "Traditional" War." *Air Force Magazine* (March 2005), 57

⁶ Searle, "Making Airpower Effective against Guerillas," 13

⁷ "Counterterrorist operations, if conducted over an extended period and on a scale commensurate with the threats we envisage, will call for capabilities that differ, both qualitatively and quantitatively, from the mix of capabilities that the U.S. armed forces has fielded today. The tasks of finding, identifying, and apprehending or killing terrorists, and of destroying stocks of CBRN weapons will call for the development of new concepts incorporating new technologies and systems. Perhaps equally challenging, the tasks of training and advising the forces of friendly governments, of winning hearts and minds, and protecting U.S. forces and interests around the world will call for investments in people, systems, and operations that, in many cases, lie outside the mainstream activities of each of the military services. Effectively meeting both sets of demands will call for leadership, creativity, and a willingness to challenge traditional institutional priorities." Ochmanek, *Military Operations Against Terrorist Groups Abroad*, 37

⁸ "National security is more than war and war is more than combat and combat is more than shooting." Arthur K. Cebrowski, Director, Force Transformation. Briefing. (Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, AL, 22 September 2004)

⁹ "The American military finds itself entrenched in a host of open-ended, low-level counterinsurgency campaigns across the Muslim world. These guerilla conflicts have become, to

Notes

no small extent, the operational reality that defines the global war on terror. But our current experience in Iraq—the central front of that broader conflict—suggests that the Pentagon still has a long way to go before it can prosecute these “small wars” with the same primacy it displayed during the “big war” this spring. Thus, if the United States is to succeed in creating a different kind of middle east, it must create a different kind of military, redefining defense transformation to meet the strategic challenge now before us.” Thomas Donnelly and Vance Serchuk. “Fighting a Global Counterinsurgency.” *American Enterprise for Public Policy Research, National Security Outlook* (December 2003)

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